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Sustainable development: the role of the international community in the prevention of the radiation threat in Central Asia

Report of the Second Committee*

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I. Introduction

1. The Second Committee held a substantive debate on agenda item 20 (see A/73/538, para. 2). Action on sub-item (k) was taken at the 24th meeting, on 21 November 2018. An account of the Committee's consideration of the sub-item is contained in the relevant summary record.[1]

II. Consideration of draft resolution A/C.2/73/L.41/Rev.1

2. At the 24th meeting, on 21 November, the representative of Kyrgyzstan, on behalf of Australia, Austria, Belarus, Canada, Czechia, Finland, Greece, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Luxembourg, Mongolia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Singapore, Slovakia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam, introduced a revised draft resolution entitled "The role of the international community in the prevention of the radiation threat in Central Asia" (A/C.2/73/L.41/Rev.1).

3. At the same meeting, the Committee was informed that the revised draft resolution had no programme budget implications.

4. Also at the same meeting, the Secretary of the Committee announced that Benin, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, France, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Republic of Moldova and Turkey had joined in sponsoring the draft resolution. Subsequently, Armenia,

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[1] A/C.2/73/SR.24.

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Lithuania, Qatar, Spain and the United States of America also joined in sponsoring the draft resolution.[1]

5. Also at the 24th meeting, a statement was made by the representative of the United States of America.

6. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.2/73/L.41/Rev.1 (see para. 7).

III. Recommendation of the Second Committee

7. The Second Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

The role of the international community in the prevention of the radiation threat in Central Asia

The General Assembly,

Reaffirming its resolution 68/218 of 20 December 2013,

Taking into account the outcome of the high-level international forum entitled "Uranium Tailings in Central Asia: Local Problems, Regional Consequences, Global Solution", held in Geneva on 29 June 2009,

Taking into account also the outcome of the international conference entitled "Uranium Tailings in Central Asia: Joint Efforts in Risk Reduction", held in Bishkek on 24 and 25 October 2012, and the subsequent conference held in Bishkek in May 2018,

Noting the high-level events dedicated to the dangers associated with the former uranium mining activities in Central Asia, which were initiated by the Government of Kyrgyzstan and the European Union and held in New York on 20 September 2017 and on 27 September 2018 on the margins of the seventy-second and seventy-third sessions of the General Assembly,

Taking into account the ongoing efforts of Central Asian States towards the remediation of former uranium facilities in Central Asia,

Taking into account also the role of the international donor community in providing support to the Central Asian States in addressing these problems at the bilateral and multilateral levels,

Taking into account further the necessity for a strategic and coordinated approach in the preparation and implementation of programmes aimed at solving the problems associated with uranium tailings in Central Asia,

Taking into account the efforts made towards the remediation of uranium tailings in Central Asia and the implementation of projects carried out under the international target programme of the Commonwealth of Independent States entitled "Remediation of the territories of States affected by uranium mining industries" and projects of the European Union-led programme on environmental remediation in Central Asia, including on conducting an integrated environmental impact assessment and feasibility studies for the environmental remediation of the uranium legacy sites of Maili-Say, Min-Kush and Shekaftar, Kyrgyzstan, Degmay and Taboshar, Tajikistan, and Chorkesar and Yangiobod, Uzbekistan, as well as promising remediation projects for these sites planned to be implemented and financed within the framework of the Environmental Remediation Account for Central Asia managed by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and noting the holding of a donors' conference in this connection which was held in London on 8 November 2018,

Noting the importance of the Strategic Master Plan for environmental remediation at the sites of former uranium facilities in Central Asia, developed by the Coordination Group for Uranium Legacy Sites of the International Atomic Energy

Agency and approved by the competent authorities of the Governments of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in 2017,[1]

Noting further that numerous burial sites of uranium waste and other extremely hazardous radioactive processing wastes are located in densely populated areas of the Central Asian countries,

Noting also that many tailings ponds are located in seismically active areas close to population centres and the banks of major rivers in the region and are subject to the threat of natural disasters,

Reaffirming the human rights to life, to an adequate standard of living and to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, and stressing in this regard the need to mitigate the impact of natural and man-made disasters in the areas around uranium waste burial sites and tailings ponds in order to avoid loss of human life, as well as immediate and long-term negative consequences for human health,

Noting the need to inform the public in a timely manner when conducting work on the prevention of the radiation threat in Central Asia,

Considering that, despite the efforts made by the States of Central Asia at the national level and despite the support of international programmes and projects to remediate former uranium mines and tailings ponds, a number of States continue to have serious social, economic and environmental problems associated with former uranium mines and tailings ponds,

Striving to contribute to strengthening the security and safety of radioactive materials,

Expressing gratitude to donor countries, in particular Czechia, Finland, Germany, Japan, Norway, the Russian Federation, Switzerland and the United States of America, and to international and regional organizations and financial institutions, including the United Nations Development Programme, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Union, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Eurasian Economic Union, the Global Environment Facility, the World Bank and others, which are providing assistance in addressing the problems of uranium tailings in the Central Asian region,

Stressing the need for a coordinated approach in the remediation of former uranium production facilities, particularly in Central Asia, and welcoming the multilateral initiatives undertaken by the international community to pool resources and identify ways of providing assistance to address the problems associated with uranium tailings ponds in the Central Asian region,

Stressing the importance of regional cooperation for successful implementation of environmental remediation in Central Asia in order, inter alia, to increase competence, exchange information and use best practices and lessons learned in the management of radioactively contaminated areas in Central Asia and other regions, including through relevant training programmes, and to use the experience gained, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme and other United Nations programmes and bodies, as well as relevant international organizations, in addressing the human factor involved in preparedness for accidents and emergency situations at uranium legacy sites with potential transboundary effects and mitigating their potential effects,

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[1] International Atomic Energy Agency, *Strategic Master Plan: Environmental Remediation of Uranium Legacy Sites in Central Asia* (Vienna, 2017).

Stressing the importance of sharing information, good practices and lessons learned in the management of radioactively contaminated areas obtained in the process of overcoming the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, and encouraging cooperation to strengthen national expertise in radiation safety and radiation protection, including through relevant training programmes, and the use of experience gained, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme and other United Nations programmes and bodies, as well as relevant international organizations, in addressing the human dimension of preparedness and recovery from nuclear disaster situations,[2]

Taking into account that the Governments and populations of the States of Central Asia are aware of the threat of possible natural or man-made disasters and their global consequences for the lives and the health of a large number of people and for the environment,

1. *Notes* the importance of remediating areas affected by former uranium extraction plants;

2. *Recognizes* the need to devise and promote effective programmes and projects for the responsible and safe management of radioactive and toxic waste in Central Asia;

3. *Also recognizes* the role of the international community in the prevention of the radiation threat in Central Asia, and emphasizes the importance of adopting preventive and other measures to resolve the problem of radioactive and toxic waste and to remediate the polluted areas in accordance with the highest safety standards and best global practices;

4. *Notes* the recent initiatives taken to strengthen the preparation and implementation of remediation programmes through the identification of priority areas;

5. *Calls upon* the international community to assist the States of Central Asia in resolving the problems of uranium tailings ponds, and emphasizes the importance of regional cooperation in the following priority areas: improvement of the legislative framework in accordance with international standards; management and maintenance at safe levels of uranium and other radioactive and toxic tailings; remediation of tailings ponds and development and implementation of special programmes and projects to improve the monitoring of their safety; raising of public awareness; adoption of measures to prevent people from gaining access to polluted materials; and implementation of socioeconomic, health and humanitarian measures to enhance the quality and standard of living of the population in regions where tailings ponds are located;

6. *Notes*:

(a) The importance of the Strategic Master Plan developed by the Coordination Group for Uranium Legacy Sites of the International Atomic Energy Agency and approved by the States of Central Asia,[1] which is designed to harmonize projects and demonstrate to the international community the availability of a reliable and jointly developed approach to the implementation of remediation programmes in all of the Central Asian countries and recent initiatives taken to strengthen the preparation and implementation of such programmes on the basis of identified priority areas;

(b) The practical implementation, begun in 2013, of the international target programme of the Commonwealth of Independent States entitled "Remediation of the

[2] See A/68/498.

erritories of States affected by uranium mining industries", which is an integral part of the European Union-led programme on environmental remediation in Central Asia aimed at environmental remediation at seven priority sites in the region, and is in line with the Strategic Master Plan;

(c) The need to develop strategies in order to inform the public and other takeholders of remediation programmes in all of the States of Central Asia;

7. *Expresses support* for the efforts made by the States of Central Asia in evising and implementing their country programmes, including in mobilizing omestic resources, and encourages the States of the region to hold further bilateral nd multilateral negotiations to avert the radiation threat in Central Asia.